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Discourse in *Música Latinoamericana* Cultural Projects from *Nueva Canción* to Colombian *Canción Social*

Les discours dans les projets culturels de música latinoamericana, *de la* nueva canción *à la* canción social *colombienne*

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Discourse in *Música Latinoamericana* Cultural Projects from *Nueva Canción* to Colombian *Canción Social*

by

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Abstract: In this article, I follow the discourses elaborated around *música latinoamericana* ("Latin American music"), a broad musical category encompassing a wide range of Latin American—but especially Andean—folk genres within successive, interrelated "cultural projects." I examine the extra-musical meanings attributed to this stylistic mode in the *nueva canción* (new song) movements of protest music in the Southern Cone, the transnational *nueva canción latinoamericana* (Latin American new song) network to which they gave rise, and ultimately focus on *música latinoamericana*'s development in Colombia. During the mid-1970s, the initial Colombian practitioners of *música latinoamericana* adopted several facets of the discourse pertaining to this music—along with the musical models themselves—from *nueva canción latinoamericana*. However, they later refined claims about the style's significance, its distinctiveness from other musical genres, and its political symbolism to fit changing cultural contexts in the cities of the Colombian interior. I argue that the discursive "work" undertaken in these cultural projects has ensured that *música latinoamericana* continues to be equated with anti-establishment politics in Colombia, and hence that it remains closely tied to *canción social* (social song), the present-day category for socially conscious music.

Keywords: *discourses – cultural projects – identity – mainstream / commercialism / commodification – politics / militantism – transnationality.*

Résumé : Dans cet article, j'entends étudier les discours qui ont accompagné la música *latinoamericana* (« musique latino-américaine ») – une catégorie musicale vaste, qui inclut une grande gamme de musiques traditionnelles d'Amérique latine, mais plus particulièrement les genres andins – au sein de « projets culturels » successifs et interreliés. J'examine les significations extra-musicales attribuées à ce style dans les mouvements protestataires de la *nueva canción* (nouvelle chanson) dans le Cône Sud, le réseau de la *nueva canción latinoamericana* qu'ils engendrèrent, et me concentre enfin sur les développements de cette musique en Colombie. Au milieu des années 1970, ses premiers interprètes colombiens adoptèrent plusieurs facettes du discours relatif à cette musique, ainsi que les modèles musicaux eux-mêmes, qu'ils trouvèrent au sein de la *nueva canción latinoamericana*. Néanmoins, ils affinèrent plus tard leur conception de la signification du style, de son originalité et de sa symbolique politique, afin de s'adapter aux contextes culturels changeants des villes de la Colombie intérieure. Je soutiens que ce « travail » discursif entrepris au sein de ces projets culturels explique pourquoi cette musique continue à être associée en Colombie à l'opposition au système dominant et qu'ainsi, elle reste liée à la *canción social*, la catégorie utilisée actuellement pour dénoter la musique engagée.

Mots-clés : *discours – projets culturels – identité – mainstream / commerce / marchandisation – politique / militantisme – transnationalité.*

In recent history, movements and institutions of progressive and conservative stripe, in subordinate as well as dominant positions, engaged in protest or totalitarian control, have drawn on cultural resources labelled as folkloric to advance their political goals. From the North American perspective, one of the most comprehensively documented cases of this phenomenon is the appropriation of working-class folk music from the U.S. South by activists from the American Communist Party during the 1930s Popular Front era and its thorough integration into leftist culture through the mid-twentieth century. Various types of movements may differ in their motivations for and approaches to enlisting folk music to their cause. Nevertheless, they must all engage with pre-existing discourses pertaining to the concept of folk culture and frame the ideas they deploy from those discourses in ways that fit their broader ideologies. William Roy has proposed that folk-based musical categories are socially constructed and in some cases politicized through the discursive "work" undertaken within "cultural projects" (2010: 50-1).

In this article, I follow the discourses elaborated for *música latinoamericana* (literally, Latin American music), a broad musical category encompassing a wide range of Latin American—and especially Andean—folk genres within successive, interrelated cultural projects. I begin with the *nueva canción* (new song) movements of protest music in the Southern Cone and continue with the *nueva canción latinoamericana* (Latin American new

song) network to which they gave rise, ultimately focusing on *música latinoamericana*'s development in Colombia. The initial Colombian practitioners of *música latinoamericana* in the mid-1970s adopted several facets of the discourse pertaining to this music—along with the musical models themselves—from *nueva canción latinoamericana* (henceforth NCL). However, they later refined claims about the style's significance, its distinctiveness from other musical categories, and its political symbolism to fit changing cultural contexts in the cities of the Colombian interior. I argue that the ideational framework produced in conjunction with these cultural projects has ensured that *música latinoamericana* continues to be equated with anti-establishment politics in Colombia.

Track	**Genre**	**Country**
1. Los Arados	sanjuanito	Ecuador
2. Huajra	[carnavalito]	Argentina
3. Nuestro México, Febrero 23	corrido	Mexico
4. Dolencias	triste andino [albazo]	Ecuador
5. Quiaqueñita	canción [carnavalito]	Argentina
6. La Petenera	son huasteco	Mexico
7. Quebrada de Humahuaca	folklore quechua y aymará [carnavalito]	Argentina
8. Así como hoy matan negros	[nueva canción]	Chile
9. La mariposa	morenada boliviana	Bolivia
10. Flor de Sancayo	huayno peruano	Peru
11. Fiesta puneña	bailecito	Argentina
12. Madrugada llanera	joropo	Venezuela

Figure 1: Track listing for the 1970 Inti-Illimani LP Cóndores del Sol (EMI LDC-35254). The genre listed in the liner notes is given first (when provided), followed by the author's precision in square brackets.

Starting in the mid-1960s, Chilean *nueva canción* ensembles such as Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani took up a format that featured Andean instruments like the *kena* (Andean flute), *zampoñas* (panpipes), *charango* (small Andean guitar), and *bombo* (drum), and built up repertoires that prominently featured stylized arrangements of rural mestizo and indigenous genres from Peru (*huayno*), Bolivia (*huayño*, *cueca*), northwestern Argentina (*bailecito*, *carnavalito*, *zamba*), and to a lesser extent, Ecuador (*sanjuanito*). However, these ensembles also performed folkloric genres from such varied places as Cuba (*son*), Venezuela (*joropo*), Mexico (*son*), and Chile itself (Chilean *cueca*, as well as *trote* and *cachimbo* from Chile's northern Andean region), and they incorporated many of the instruments traditionally used to execute them.[1] These groups flourished in the late 1960s in tandem with the campaign that brought the socialist Popular Unity coalition into power in Chile in 1970. Following the military coup led by Augusto Pinochet in 1973, most *nueva canción* artists were forced into exile and many subsequently spent years travelling the globe soliciting solidarity for the Chilean people's struggle to restore democracy.

As was the case in diverse locales throughout Latin America, Chilean *nueva canción* strongly impacted left-leaning artists in Colombia as of the late 1960s (Gómez, 1973). The *nuevo cancionero argentino* ("new Argentine songbook") initiated by Argentine musicians and intellectuals in 1963, along with the Uruguayan variant of protest music that came to be known as *canto popular* (popular song), were also on Colombian musicians' radars. *Nueva trova* (new song), the Cuban movement that together with its counterparts in the Southern Cone began constituting the international NCL scene during this period, was increasingly influential. Colombian musicians' own take on oppositional music-making was known from the late 1960s on as *canción protesta* (protest song). In 1968, a small group of musicians in the capital, Bogotá, founded the Center for Protest Song, which hosted a *peña* (coffee house) of folk and protest music (*Voz Proletaria*, April 25, 1968; Gómez, 1973). Among the artists who were involved with this Center were the singer-songwriter Pablus Gallinazo and the duo Ana y Jaime, who would go on to achieve commercial success and become the most well-known representatives of Colombian *canción protesta.* They appear to have preceded the main surge of musical influence from the Southern Cone by some years, although Ana y Jaime later popularized in Colombia songs such as "Ni Chicha ni Limoná," by Chilean *nueva canción* icon Víctor Jara, and "A Desalambrar," by Uruguayn *canto popular* figurehead Daniel Viglietti. Nevertheless, by the late 1970s progressive musicians in Colombia's highland cities of Bogotá and Medellín, and especially those attending public universities, had gravitated towards the type of music disseminated by NCL groups that came to be known as *música latinoamericana.*

In my search through archival materials, I found that the term *canción protesta* was replaced by the moniker *canción social* (social song) in Colombia over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Today, the *canción social* category includes the widely known stars of NCL, Colombian singers of *canción protesta* from decades past, and contemporary

artists associated with a range of artistic and political sectors. While *canción social* is thus fairly heterogeneous in terms of musical style, a firm link persists between *música latinoamericana* and the very notion of socially conscious music in Colombia, as represented by *canción social.*

A note concerning terminology is in order before proceeding. My use of the term *música latinoamericana* here is intended to reflect its usage by my consultants and in general parlance.[2] In Colombia, this appellative is used interchangeably with *música andina* (Andean music) to denote the broad musical style, described above, in which folkloric genres and instruments from South America's central Andean region (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and the northern reaches of Argentina and Chile) are foregrounded.[3] In some cases, though, the scope of *música latinoamericana* surpasses that of *música andina* to include folkloric styles from other Latin American countries. The meaning I intend here is perhaps best captured by the less commonly employed phrase *música andina latinoamericana* (Andean Latin American music). To confuse the nomenclature further, the term *música andina colombiana* (Colombian Andean music) designates the creole musical forms (e.g. *bambuco*, *pasillo*) that are native to the central highland area of the country. While a detailed explanation of musical differences between *música andina* and *música andina colombiana* is not possible here, one important distinction is that Amerindian wind instruments such as *kena* and *zampoñas* are vital in the former, whereas the latter depends primarily on various stringed instruments adapted from European models (e.g. *tiple* and *bandola*).

Música Latinoamericana in Colombia

A small number of groups, including Los Hermanos Escamilla, which had ties to the Communist Party, began performing *música latinoamericana* in Bogotá in the early 1970s. But it was only in the second half of the decade that a set of musicians, most of them students at the capital's public universities, began to form the ensembles that would become the style's major exponents in Colombia during the 1980s, including Chimizapagua (ca. 1976), Tikchamaga (ca. 1977), and Alma de los Andes (ca. 1978). In Colombia's second largest city, Medellín, the Communist Party members who founded the ensemble Quiramaní towards 1975 started out by interpreting repertoire from the Argentine *nuevo cancionero* and Chilean *nueva canción* for Party functions in the city (Safira, personal communication). The group that has been the main conduit in Medellín for the musical agenda established by NCL ensembles is Grupo Suramérica, created by a group of students in 1976. Musicians in the southern-central city of Cali (Waxer, 2001: 235), the nearby town of Sevilla (Ochoa, 1996: 95), and the southwestern city of Pasto (Broere, 1989: 117) also experimented with the NCL brand of *música latinoamericana* during the 1970s.

If *música latinoamericana* first took hold in Colombia during the 1970s, the 1980s marked its heyday. In 1980, Grupo Suramérica hosted the Concert for Latin America, an event that brought together a dozen ensembles specializing in the *latinoamericana* style and attracted thirty thousand spectators (*El Mundo*, July 27, 1980). A few months before

Figure 2: Flyer for the 1981 "Latin American Concert" in Bogotá (from the personal collection of William Morales).

the event had its second iteration in 1981, a headline in a major Medellín newspaper announced, "*Música Latinoamericana* Breaks Through Among the Youth" (*El Colombiano*, March 27, 1981). A similar large-scale "Latin American Concert" was held in the same year in Bogotá (figure 2). Many of the musicians with whom I spoke looked back on the 1980s as a time during which this format became a minor fad. With the music increasingly accessible through live performance at festivals and well-attended *peñas*, and audible on specialty radio programs (Roger Díaz, personal communication), a number of groups emerged to satisfy the growing demand, the most prominent of which were Vilcapampa (1979), Nuestra América (ca. 1981), and Illary (1986), all from Medellín. However, very few of the first groups to adopt *música latinoamericana* continued this type of work into the 1990s. Towards the end of the 1980s, the socially conscious stream of *música latinoamericana* began to cede ground to a more conventional emphasis on romantic themes. This approach was exemplified by the super group of Bolivian folk music Los Kjarkas, which several consultants credited for taking the style in a commercial direction.

Discourse in Música Latinoamericana Cultural Projects

As discussed in the introduction, Roy's description of the workings of a cultural project can be helpful for understanding how musical categories acquire socio-political meaning: "A cultural project is a coordinated activity by an identifiable group of people to *define* a category of cultural objects,

distinguish it from other cultural objects, make claims about its *significance* and meaning, promote its adoption by others, and thereby have a social impact" (2010: 50, my emphasis). As seen here, three of the closely interrelated endeavours that come together in an archetypal cultural project to produce a coherent discourse about the cultural objects at its core are "definition work," "boundary work," and "significance claims." Examination of the ideas about *música latinoamericana* that were forged in successive cultural projects—in the Southern Cone movements of politically conscious music, in the transnational arena of NCL, and in Colombia—allows us to observe how the discourses relating to this stylistic mode were propagated and adapted in differing geographic and temporal contexts.

As I demonstrate below, musicians in Colombia received many of their original extra-musical beliefs about *música latinoamericana* from the bourgeoning NCL complex, of which the Southern Cone movements were driving forces. Beginning with the 1967 International Meeting of Protest Song in Cuba, artists from numerous Latin American countries intermingled regularly in the NCL festival circuit through the 1970s and 1980s. Musicians with similar—but by no means uniform—political philosophies increasingly hashed out the richly layered associations they had already attributed to *música latinoamericana* within their "national" milieus in this pan-Latin framework.[4] As such, the task of comprehensively identifying the prevailing themes in the discourse around *música latinoamericana* in this transnational cultural project is a knotty one that is beyond the scope of this study. Using Roy's model as a guide, I want to therefore focus here on one fundamental significance claim, one example of the key boundary demarcations affirmed for this musical category, and finally, what I propose to be its broadest definitional concern, with a view towards tracking how these notions evolved in Colombia.

Latin American / Andean Unity

It is clear that the celebration of a unified Latin American identity was an important significance claim that underpinned the adoption and projection of *música latinoamericana* by NCL musicians throughout the continent. A sense of "Americanism" had guided the work of musicians involved with the *nuevo cancionero* in Argentina during the 1960s (Molinero & Vila, 2014: 195). The prominence of Andean and other Latin American folk music in Chilean *nueva canción* can be partly attributed to this strong Latin Americanist sentiment, as composers sought to express their cultural kinship with the other peoples of Latin America in song texts and through their selection of musical genres (Orrego Salas, 1985: 6-7; Rodríguez Musso, 1988: 62). Guillermo Barzuna cites a number of songs by NCL musicians from Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Cuba in which the idea of continental unity is advanced (1997: 105-14). Similarly, musicians affiliated with NCL in Mexico (Pacheco, 1994: 336) and Nicaragua (Scruggs, 2006) rationalized their engagement with pan-Latin folk styles with the idea that a united front was required for the struggle against the continent's multiple despotic regimes.

Musicians in Colombia who began to take up *música latinoamericana* during the 1970s were apparently cognizant of this perspective on the category's significance. Gustavo Escamilla, of the ensemble Los Hermanos Escamilla, described the mindset among his cohort of revolutionary artists as such: "And then some lovely texts begin to say 'Latin America must go hand in hand to build a united society.' A Latin American way of thinking was born: not Colombian, nor Argentine, nor Chilean—Latin American" (personal communication).[5] It is unsurprising to find that the names of *latinoamericana* groups in Colombia, such as Grupo Suramérica ("South America Ensemble") and Nuestra América ("Our America"), conjured the notion of a continental identity. This idea was also prominent on record jackets and in concert programs through the 1980s, as when, in the program notes for a Chimizapagua performance in Bogotá on October 5, 1984, the group states that they integrate music from the entire Andean region in order "to reaffirm Latin American unity in its cultural expression."

However, my findings suggest that a claim for a more particular kind of Andean cultural unity arose as a discursive justification for the performance of the Andean-oriented brand of *música latinoamericana* in Colombia as a discernible cultural project coalesced around the music in the late 1970s. Involvement with the music has permitted musicians to assert cultural links between Colombia as an Andean nation and the core Andean region of South America that stretches up from northwestern Argentina and northern Chile, and through Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. In a 1981 interview, for instance, a member of Alma de los Andes ("Soul of the Andes") stated: "This Andean music that we perform **. . .** transforms us into veritable brothers of the northern Argentines, of the Chileans, Bolivians, Peruvians, and Ecuadorians" (Cruz Cárdenas, 1981). I further noted that the musicians I interviewed consistently highlighted the belonging of the southwestern Colombian highlands, specifically, to this greater Andean area. They often buttressed their assertions that Colombia is part of the Andean world by referencing the fact that the Inca Empire extended through the region mapped out above into what is today Colombia's southwestern tip.[6]

The linkage between the southern Colombian highlands and the rest of Andean South America had been practically embodied in the work of the ensemble Chimizapagua, which split its performances and recordings roughly equally between *música latinoamericana* and the southern Colombian *chirimía* configuration (figure 3). Many Colombians tend to associate the latter ensemble type, which is made up of transverse flutes and drums and has been traditionally performed in indigenous and peasant communities, more closely with musical expressions to the south of the Colombian border than with *música andina colombiana*, the string-based music of the central Colombian Andean zone. Musicians, among others, frequently invoke the Incan connection to account for these types of cross-border musical affinities. In the program notes for one of Chimizapagua's 1991 performances, for example, folklorist Guillermo Abadía Morales posited that "rhythmic accents" from the music

Figure 3: Back cover of the 1984 Chimizapagua album Experiencia (Philips 818696-1).

of the "Incaic zones" could be heard in the traditional music of southern Colombia.

Second- and third-generation practitioners of the socially conscious strain of *música latinoamericana* in Colombia have continued to postulate a deeply rooted, common Andean cultural identity, which manifests in the musical realm, as a key significance claim for *música andina latinoamericana*. When in 2011 I spoke with members of the ensemble Nuestro Tiempo (Our Time), formed in Medellín in 1999, one musician stated his belief that certain folk genres in the southern Andean area of Colombia "bear a greater resemblance to the Argentine *chacarera*, to the Chilean *cueca*, to Ecuadorian music" (personal communication). I found further evidence for the persistence of this idea among people involved with Andean music in recent years during my participation with one of the many panpipe troupes currently active in the Bogotá area. While these ensembles focus musically on panpipe consort genres from Peru and Bolivia, the only form of Colombian music they practice is *chirimía* music.

Anti-Commercialism

The symbolic evocation of Latin American unity that participants of the NCL movement ascribed to *música latinoamericana* was closely tied to the "boundary work" through which they positioned it in contrast to non-Latin American cultural forms and in opposition to commercial popular music more broadly. The artists who launched the *nuevo cancionero argentino* had already denounced "the invasion of the decadent and vulgar foreign hybrids forms" along with commercial interests in music in their 1963 manifesto (Tejada Gómez, 2003 [1963]). Similarly, the Chilean *nueva canción* musicians who began integrating Latin American traditional genres into their work in the late 1960s were reacting simultaneously to the dominance of Euro-American music in the mainstream media and to the commercial orientation of the urban Chilean *neofolklore* scene that had arisen in the early 1960s (Rodríguez Musso, 1988: 60; Torres, 1980: 40). In recalling the principles he and the co-founders of Quilapayún sought to uphold in their own ensemble, Eduardo Carrasco Pirard wrote: "We did not want to make concessions to the commercial . . . We also rejected the Anglo-Saxon penetration in our music . . . in this during much time we took our Latin Americanism to the extreme." (2003: 22) Carrasco has also proposed a fundamental "dividing line" between, on the one hand, "run-of-the mill popular song" that subscribes to market dictates and accommodates the hegemony of foreign influences, and on the other, the various manifestations of *nueva canción* in Latin America (1982: 601-2).

As Colombian musicians developed their understanding of what *música latinoamericana* meant to them in the early 1980s, they maintained similar discursive boundaries around the music. For example, an article about Chimizapagua related that their music "presents a challenge to commercialization and the tastes imposed by record labels and foreign cultures" (*Vanguardia Liberal*, December 20, 1982). The musicians of Alma de los Andes alluded more specifically to the musical forms that they felt were corrupting Latin American identity:

> "We are not unfamiliar with rock, nor disco music . . . but in reality the contribution that these expressions make to us, the Latin American youth, and in general to the culture of our continent, is minimal." (Cruz Cárdenas 1981)

Contemporary supporters of *música latinoamericana* appear to have inherited the anti-commercial posture forged earlier on, since they continue to register distinctions between socially conscious *música latinoamericana* and the mainstream popular music that reigns in Colombia's cosmopolitan centers. Among musicians in the metropolises of the central Colombian highlands, this perspective ties in to their expressions of envy that *música latinoamericana* has a higher profile in the southern Colombian cities of Pasto and Popayán, not to mention massive followings in Andean countries like Ecuador and Bolivia. For instance, a posting on the Facebook page of a Medellín group in November 2012 set up a stark division between a festival being held in Quito, Ecuador, which featured a number of the NCL groups that helped pioneer the *latinoamericana* format, and the concerts put on by Madonna in Medellín on the same nights. It read,

> "Greetings to all the people of Quito who have been enjoying [. . .] that music which is still necessary and remains current. Quilapayún, Inti-Illimani: [. . .] what revelry of good music that doesn't require extravagant stages, or dancers, or superficial pop idols created by marketing and scandal, like the one that will visit our city tomorrow. Quito, enjoy that music of which little remains."

Today, *latinoamericana* musicians perceive that the unabashed commercialism of *reggaeton*, a genre with unmistakable Latin American roots, poses the greatest threat to the progressive values encoded in their preferred medium. A mix of hip-hop and Jamaican dancehall reggae with Spanish lyrics, *reggaeton* achieved enormous popularity throughout Latin America in the early 2000s and remains a vital trend (Grove Music Online). While many of the genre's early stars and a great number of its consumers were Puerto Rican, a recent newspaper headline in Colombia trumpeted: "Medellín Unseats Puerto Rico as 'Global Capital of *Reggaeton*.'" (*El Tiempo*, October 17, 2013). Reacting to this development, Roger Díaz of Illary told me: "Unfortunately this is a city now absolutely inundated by *reggaeton* . . . and by a lifestyle that is every day more consumerist, every day more classist, so . . . there are some sectors that see [*canción social*] . . . as something that is no longer worth disseminating." A musician in Bogotá who was part of the *latinoamericana* vocal ensemble Quinteto Fuga during the 1980s similarly juxtaposed the extra-musical associations evoked by *música latinoamericana* to those accompanying *reggaeton*:

> "The symbolism is basically—it's historical, you know? *Música latinoamericana* equals Inti-Illimani, equals Chilean revolution, equals bearded men, equals ponchos, hippies; so people associate those things. In other words, people don't associate *música andina* for example with sunglasses, or watches, or cars, like they do with *reggaeton*." (personal communication)

A Broad Definition

It is not surprising that the musician just quoted would point to such strong associations between *música latinoamericana* and political turmoil in Chile. The music's history in that country was crucial to how Latin Americans and those further

afield processed its political meaning. Andean music, especially, was imbued with strong leftist associations thanks to the political inclinations of its foremost disseminators in Chile, such as the Parra family (Rios, 2008: 156), and the support that its exponents lent to Salvador Allende's Popular Unity coalition during its campaign for the 1970 elections and during its time in government from 1970 to 1973 (Fairley, 1989: 5). A clear indicator of the extent to which this music was indelibly identified with progressive politics in Chile is the de facto—if never officially decreed—ban that existed on Andean music and instruments during the early years of the dictatorship (Jordán, 2009: 81-3). As they criss-crossed the world after 1973 commemorating the fallen socialist government and promoting other leftist causes, Chilean *nueva canción* ensembles established a profound connection for their audiences between *música latinoamericana* and leftist politics as represented by their anti-Pinochet stance (Rios, 2008: 170).

While Chilean political exiles were the most successful group in generating attention internationally for human rights violations in their homeland, the 1970s also saw dissidents fleeing dictatorships in Argentina and Uruguay and attempting to drum up opposition to the repressive regimes in those countries (Sznajder & Roniger, 2009). Militant pro-democracy movements throughout the Southern Cone captured the imagination of the Colombian Left during the mid-1970s. Organizations and individuals in Colombia that were sympathetic to the Chilean cause held solidarity actions (Grabe, 2000: 69) and the leftist press reported closely on the situation in Chile (Ayala Diago, 2003: 333). In the most radical sectors of Colombian society, armed rebel groups had ties to, and in some cases direct involvement from members of, guerrilla organizations in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and even received cassettes of music and poetry from them (Grabe, 2000: 69, 85, 135-7). As such, while early aficionados of *música latinoamericana* in Colombia likely associated it closely with the Chilean struggle, many of them defined the style as more broadly relating to resistance against dictatorships across the Southern Cone. William Morales, who performed with an exiled Argentinean in a duo called Por Latinoamérica (For Latin America) before joining Chimizapagua, drew a direct correlation between the installation of hardline regimes in Chile and Argentina and the reception of NCL among students at the National University in Bogotá during the mid-1970s:

> "We are talking about a very critical moment, about the political difficulties in Argentina; we are talking about the political problems in Chile. We were a student body that received those influences. We're talking about Violeta Parra, about Víctor Jara, and even about Atahualpa Yupanqui." (personal communication)[7]

At a "festival of Latin American song" held in Bogotá in 1976, which was titled Este Canto en Libertad (This Free Song) and was attended by artists from several countries, the performers read a "manifesto of solidarity with the victims of repression in Latin America"; at least one musician strummed along on a *charango* (*Alternativa* 96, August 30, 1976). While there can be little doubt that the declaration included denunciations

of the violent tactics used to quash political dissent in the Southern Cone nations, the pan-Latin NCL movement was concerned with state-issued oppression, socialist/communist revolution, and anti-imperialism throughout the continent and beyond (e.g. the Vietnam War). In the late 1970s, revolutionary efforts such as those taking place in Central America garnered much attention, and exiled *nueva canción* ensembles working in the *latinoamericana* format called for solidarity with the revolutionary fighters and the people they were purporting to liberate (Fairley, 1989: 14). At a basic level, then, during the 1970s NCL musicians and activists positioned *música latinoamericana* as fundamentally expressing the counter-hegemonic aspirations of the Latin American leftist community (Bodiford, 2007).

During *música latinoamericana*'s zenith in Colombia in the 1980s, however, some musicians who specialized in this style actually tried to distance themselves from its political associations. Speaking about the origins of his ensemble Nuestra América in the early 1980s, one member commented: "we were leaving the era of protest music and from the beginning we wanted to develop a message that eschewed political propaganda" (*El Mundo*, July 19, 1993). While it is not possible here to fully explore the motivations behind this apparent shift, it should be noted that the end of the 1970s ushered in a period of intense political repression in Colombia itself. In 1978, President Julio César Turbay Ayala imposed a Security Statute that targeted leftist political activity and instituted strict controls over the media (Palacios, 2006: 197). More than one musician told me about having experienced direct and indirect censorship and threats from the security establishment during this time. On the other hand, the primary audience for *música latinoamericana* during the 1980s, and the source for many of its performers, was the student population, which had become increasingly identified with the Left since the 1960s and was ramping up its protests on several fronts in the early 1980s (Archila Neira, 2003: 150, 398). Many of my consultants agreed that this constituency helped to sustain the music's overall political connotations in the public domain.

It is evident that contemporary practitioners of *música latinoamericana* must negotiate the multiple and sometimes contradictory layers of symbolism it has accrued over the decades since it took root in Colombia. The activist-musicians from the ensemble Nuestro Tiempo, for example, decried the fact that the *latinoamericana* style had become a fad in Medellín during the 1990s, losing much of its political salience (personal communication). One member spoke about having previously played in an ensemble modeled after Los Kjarkas and feeling a profound disconnect between the predominantly romantic orientation of their repertoire and the realities of violence and poverty experienced in his working-class neighbourhood. Even as they reflect critically on their cultural distance from the era of revolutionary fervour in which *música latinoamericana* was first introduced in Colombia, the members of Nuestro Tiempo seek to recuperate some of the political resonance it initially carried. For instance, when I asked why their politically committed project was still fun-

damentally executed using the *latinoamericana* format, one member responded:

> "It may be that we are a bit stubborn, since in fact what we are describing to you is the opposite tendency, that there was a rupture between those formats and the old repertoire and oppositional song . . . the group since its beginnings has attempted to kind of negotiate that contradiction: 'Well that's such a cliché . . . that's something from the seventies,' and people said, 'man it's just that talking about political music, from the panpipes to the *charango*, the same old stale story . . .' And perhaps our position was idealistic but that's why we said it is Our Time [Nuestro Tiempo]—to sort of reserve for ourselves the right to sing in that format. Because it has meaning: that format is built very eclectically, but it is a puzzle that unites Latin America on one stage—an on-stage proposal; and that already has a political intention . . . The ponchos have meaning; the *kenas* have meaning, the panpipes—all of that."

Notwithstanding the apparent "rupture" between *música latinoamericana* and the dominant political interpretations carved out for it in the 1970s, the "definition work" carried out in the context of the NCL movement—including at its Colombian node —during that time has ensured that an equation between the style's Andean nucleus and anti-establishment politics has become deeply embedded in Colombian popular discourse. I observed one illustration of this relationship in the present day when I attended a public hearing in the Plains region on labour and land rights that was organized by a coalition of unions and activist organizations. One of the most prominent traditional and popular musics in the Plains region is *música llanera* (Plains music), which is typically performed with harp, *cuatro* (four-stringed guitar), and maracas, and it is quite distinct from Andean music. Remarkably, though, the only instruments I saw at the meeting itself were Andean *kenas* and *zampoñas*, and *música latinoamericana* figured conspicuously in the pre- and post-hearing playlists. There is also a darker side to the indelible association between *música latinoamericana* and leftism: An informant in a study on the violent conflict in northern Colombia testified that paramilitaries accused her of being affiliated with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—an allegation that carried great risk—merely because she listened to *música andina* (Madariaga, 2006: 52).

Given the enduring political symbolism attached to *música latinoamericana*, it is natural that it remains closely linked to the umbrella category for socially conscious music known as *canción social*. One example of this tight association came when I asked a street vendor in downtown Bogotá if he had any records of Andean folkloric music and he replied instead that he did have *canción social* LPs. The overlap in audience for these categories does not escape marketing personnel in the music industry, as can be appreciated in an advertising insert found in the CD *Canción Social: Grandes Clásicos Vol. 2* (Great Classics) that lists the issuing label's other offerings in the "Música Andina & Canción Social" grouping. In fact, when independent Colombian labels sought to capitalize on the interest in *social* compilations in the early 2000s, they turned to ensembles specializing in *música latinoamericana* to record covers of the staples of this repertoire. There is coincidence too in the spaces in which *canción social* and *música latinoamericana* are performed. Groups dedicated

to *m*úsica latinoamericana are usually included in events that bear the *canción social* label, as was the case when Grupo Suramérica headlined the First Festival of Canción Social in Medellín in 2009, and Andean music festivals typically showcase at least one ensemble that is categorized primarily under the rubric of *canción social*. In other cases, the correspondence between these categories is made explicit, as in the Noche de Canción Social, Andina, y Latinoamericana (Evening of Social, Andean, and Latin American Song) held in 2012 in Medellín (figure 4).

Figures 4: Promotional image for the Evening of Social, Andean, and Latin American Song.

Summary

During the 1970s, NCL ensembles inspired leftist musicians in Colombia to cultivate *música andina latinoamericana*. Ideas concerning the significance, boundary delineations, and overall definition of the musical practices in this category of Andean-oriented, pan-Latin American folkloric music accompanied its arrival in Colombia. At this juncture, the music's linkages to Latin American unity, anti-commercialism, and anti-dictatorial struggles throughout Latin America were generally consistent with the meanings generated for it in the NCL movement. As a robust *música latinoamericana* cultural project was consolidated in Colombia in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, its participants reconfigured certain aspects of this discourse. For them, performance of the music was connected to a proclamation of expressly pan-Andean cultural ties, an idea that is still voiced today. Colombian adherents have continued to evoke the distinction that has long been made between *música latinoamericana* and commercial popular music trends, but in the twenty-first century they have presented it especially as an antidote to the commercialism of *reggaeton*. Although some artists sought to downplay *música latinoamericana*'s political associations during the 1980s, later generations of politically minded musicians have made a point of resuscitating them. This stylistic mode still carries the hue of leftist politics in Colombia and is inextricably tied to the category of *canción social*.

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Notes

1. Inti-Illimani's 1970 recording, *Cóndores del Sol*, offers a representative example of this approach (see figure 1).
2. This article is based on ethnographic and archival research conducted in several cities of the Colombian interior between 2011 and 2014. All translations from Spanish-language interviews and texts are my own.
3. For example, note how the musician quoted on page 12 alternates between the two terms. While it is difficult to ascertain precisely how the term *música latinoamericana* came to refer to this specific format in Colombia, it is clear that this usage was already in place by the beginning of the 1980s. The phrase appears to have taken on a similar meaning in Peru (Oliart & Lloréns, 1984: 81) and Chile (Laura Jordán, personal communication). It should be stressed that the term would not be similarly understood throughout Latin America: In Bolivia, this type of music was labelled *música nacional* (national music), as it in fact drew heavily on Bolivian genres (Rios, 2009: 11).
4. In fact, Fernando Rios has shown that the process through which Andean music took on political connotations unfolded over transnational cosmopolitan networks linking Latin America and Europe from the outset (2008: 154-55).
5. The first half of the lyrical fragment cited appears to be from the song "Venas Abiertas," which was recorded by Argentine *nuevo cancionero* luminary Mercedes Sosa.
6. Indeed, political cohesion in a large swath of South American territory under Inca rule had already inspired the pan-Latin approach of Chilean *nueva canción* artists (Rios, 2008: 156).
7. The folklorist-composers Violeta Parra and Atahualpa Yupanqui, from Chile and Argentina, respectively, are widely hailed as the progenitors of NCL.